



FACT SHEET #4

BLM MAKES PROGRESS IN THE CLEANUP OF THE VETA GRANDE MINE SITE



Figure 1. General Area Map

Introduction

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Carson City Field Office (CCFO), in cooperation with the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Emergency Response Office, San Francisco, CA, completed another milestone in continuing efforts to cleanup the abandoned Veta Grande mine site. The Veta Grande mine/mill site is located approximately 10 miles southeast of the town of Gardnerville, Nevada, and 0.23 miles east of U.S. Highway 395.

Site History

The Veta Grande mine is located on approximately 90 acres of public land in Douglas County. Mining activity was sporadic from 1860 until the 1980s, when the Veta Grande Mining Company renewed operations, then abandoned the site.

BLM Actions to Date

- ◆ In 1992, the BLM initiated a Preliminary Assessment/Site Investigation of the Veta Grande mine/mill site. Soil and water samples were collected and revealed cyanide

and heavy metal contamination in both the surface and sub-surface environment.

- ◆ From 1992 to 1999, the BLM collected quarterly water well samples, testing for cyanide. The studies indicated that cyanide levels were increasing in at least one domestic water well. Those levels, however, still did not exceed federal or state drinking water standards.

- ◆ In 2000, the BLM expanded both the number of water sample locations (up to 14) and began testing for a wide array of elements, metals and salts.

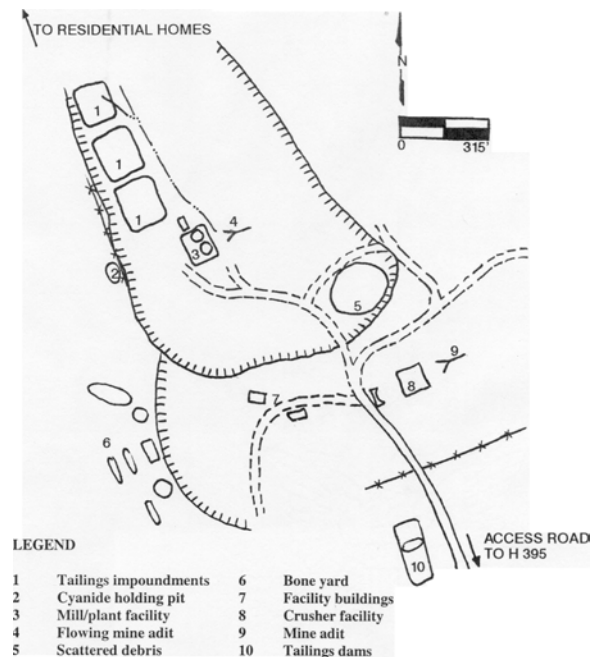


Figure 2. Veta Grande mine site map

- ◆ In October of 2001, BLM began providing drinking water to four households.

- ◆ In October of 2001, BLM contracted with Philip Services to cleanup trash, junk, scrap metals, abandoned mining equipment, and to excavate and remove an empty underground storage tank (Figure 3). Over 700 cubic yards of debris were delivered to a local metal recycling firm or properly disposed of in a landfill.



Figure 3. Underground storage tank at the Veta Grande mine site. As of 10-15-2001, this tank has been removed from the site.

◆ In December 2001, Environmental Quality Management Inc., of Lynnwood, WA., began earth-moving operations at the cyanide pit. Contaminated soils were removed from the cyanide pit and encased in thick, impervious plastic on-site. The cyanide pit area was excavated down to the bedrock, partially backfilled with dirt, covered with an impervious plastic liner and an additional layer of dirt that has been contoured and seeded with native species.

◆ In August 2002, a dangerous mine opening was backfilled. The mine had filled with water and was a cool, inviting place for people to explore, swim, and possibly drown. The outflowing water had created a small but rich riparian zone that attracted wildlife, birds and amphibians. Some of the riparian habitat was lost in the backfill effort but the pond has been reconstructed, the majority of the habitat saved and the recovery is underway.

◆ In October of 2002, the cyanide contaminated soils were completely removed from the site and properly disposed at a local landfill.

◆ In cooperation with the BLM, the U.S.

Army Corps of Engineers and their local area contractor, Camp Dresser & McKee Inc., (CDM) has begun a local study of the Veta Grande hydrology to better define the migration routes for cyanide and/or other pollutants through rock fractures. It is hoped that the hydrologic study will answer several questions about the nature of the cyanide plume.

Next Steps

The BLM is looking at addressing the following needs as part of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) process:

- Identify options, if any, to eliminate cyanide in groundwater within rock fractures
- Develop plans to further stabilize two tailings dams and reduce the risk of failure
- Sampling tailings for cyanide and heavy metals
- Developing plans to seal tailings on all sides, if necessary
- Identifying other reclamation options such as run-off and run-on controls.

Community Involvement

The Carson City BLM office would like to keep you informed about planned or ongoing activities at the site and to give you the opportunity to provide input into the decision-making process. The BLM seeks to identify community concerns and information needs regarding the BLM's ongoing cleanup activities at the mine site.

For more information, or to be included in future mailings, contact:

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Veta Grande Mine Site Fall, 2001

Before cleanup: Cement mixer, circa 1953



After cleanup:



Cyanide pit cleanup in progress, scraping to bedrock.



Cyanide pit cleanup in progress, laying out the liner.



Cyanide pit cleanup in progress.



Cyanide pit cleanup is complete. Pit has been covered with a liner, which was buried under fill dirt, then seeded.

